

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application and have been rejected. Claims 2, 13, and 20 are herein canceled. New claim 21 has been added. No new matter has been added by these amendments.

The core feature of the present invention is that a dry fluid is directly conducted into the space and into the wafer/hybrid holding device and directly fed outside the space, and thereafter re-fed into the space. In other words, the dry fluid has a double function, namely in a first step, only conditioning the wafer/hybrid holding device, and in a second step after having left the space to be re-fed into the space and to condition space.

Both prior art documents cited by the Examiner fail to disclose or to make obvious such an arrangement.

In particular, U.S. Patent No. 5,885,353, which was also cited in the International Preliminary Examination Report discloses that solvent vapors are conducted through an exhaust piping to an exhaust manifold which is directed to a facility exhaust system (see column 7, lines 20-16). No mention is made in this document to re-feed exhaust gases to the system.

U.S. Patent No. 6,099,643 discloses in Fig. 10 that external air is conducted through an opening W2 to an atmospheric conditioning unit F. The air is supplied on the atmospheric conditioning unit F to a spin coater and thereafter rises through an opening W3 and joins with the air flowing from the opening W2, to be introduced into the

atmospheric conditioning unit F again and to be reused (see column 8, line 59 to column 9, line 15).

However, this is different from the present invention as disclosed in new independent claims 1, 9 and 21, respectively, because the dry air is firstly conducted to the wafer hybrid holding device (without being fed into the space), then fed outside the space (without being fed to the space), and finally re-fed to the space.


Since none of these two documents cited by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office gives the smallest hint to have such a distinct double function of a dry fluid, we believe that amended claims 1, 9 and 21 are patentable over the cited prior art.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the claims as herein presented are allowable over the prior art of record, taken alone or in combination, and that the respective rejections be withdrawn. Applicants further submit that the application is hereby placed in condition for allowance which action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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